

SOFTWARE HELP

YOUR EXPERTS

Contact Software Help for software advice and answers

Kay Ewbank

Database developer and productivity expert Kay Ewbank offers help with office applications.



Ben Pitt

Professional musician and keen photographer Ben Pitt gives advice on using creative software.



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Mixing tracks for party CD

Q I want to burn a CD for a party using crossfades, so the tracks blend into one another. I normally use iTunes, but this automatically inserts a gap between songs when burning a CD. Do you know of any software that I can use to help me?

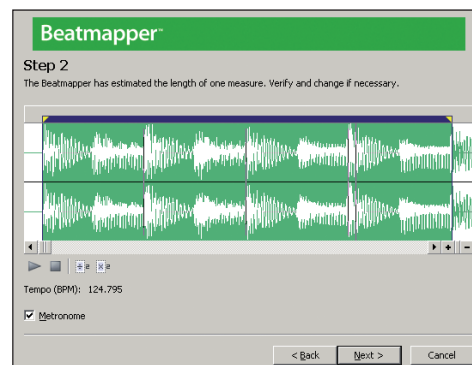
Paul Clements

A Our favourite software for creating crossfade CDs is Sony Acid Music Studio. It costs £47 from www.dv247.com, but a 30-day trial version is available at www.sonycreativesoftware.com. Click Downloads, Trials & Demos and ACID Music Studio 7.0 and follow the instructions to install the software.

Acid Music Studio first runs with a demo song, so click File, New to start a new project. Use the Explorer panel at the bottom to locate your MP3 files on your hard disk and drop them into the central arrange panel. To use protected AAC or WMA files bought from online stores, burn them to CD using the software you bought them with and re-import them in MP3 format. The software asks if you want to use the Beatmapper Wizard function. To create a mix CD where the tempo is maintained from one track to the next, select Yes. If not, select No, Finish and skip the next paragraph.

The Beatmapper Wizard attempts to identify the tempo of a track, but lets you check its progress and make alterations if necessary. It can't handle tracks with a changing tempo, which rules out a lot of guitar-based music. Click next, and the wizard looks for a downbeat (the start of a bar). If it doesn't find it, click on the waveform to correct it, zooming in and out with the mouse's scroll button. Click Next again, and the wizard will try to identify the first full bar. You'll hear a click that should be in time with the track. If it isn't, drag the right marker to the start of the second bar to form a coherent loop. Click Next again, and drag the Measure slider to audition different bars throughout the track. Slight timing discrepancies in the previous step will turn into large errors later on, so fine-tune the loop points at bars later in the track. When you're satisfied with the results, click Next then Finish.

The MP3 file's name will appear on its own track in the Arrange panel. To add the audio, drag the mouse over the corresponding track, dragging off the right edge of the screen to scroll the preview so the entire



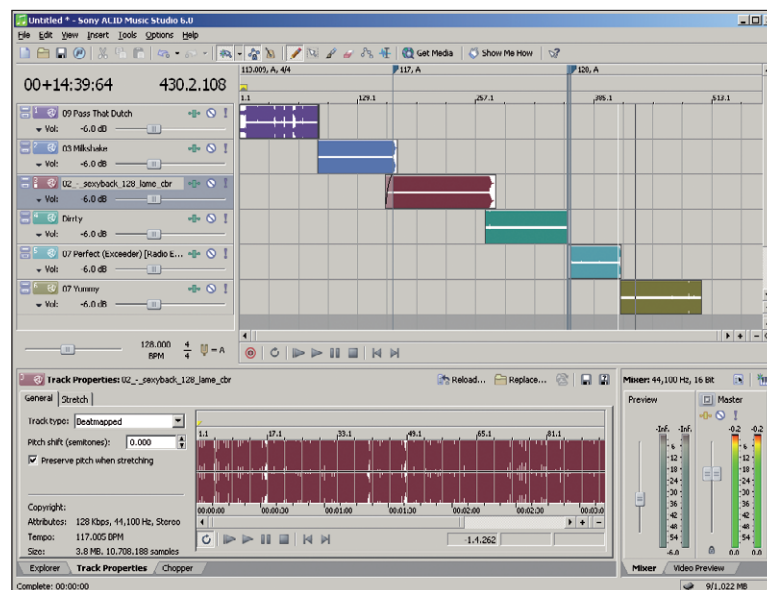
▲ The ExpressFX Dynamics effect allows you to turn up the volume without distorting the output

track is used – you can always trim it again. Repeat the process for each track you want to use, lining up the start of each track so it overlaps the end of the previous one. Tracks lock to the grid, but the resolution of this grid depends on how much you zoom in. Zoom in using the mouse's scroll button for more precise edits. Trim the start and end of tracks by dragging either end, and fade them in or out by dragging the top corners.

If you're using the Beatmapper Wizard, the tempo will automatically be locked to that of the first track you imported. To vary it, select a point on the timeline, type Shift-T and type in your new tempo. Acid Music Studio can't do gradual tempo changes, so you'll need to enter a series of small changes to achieve this effect.

The default volume when importing tracks is -6dB. This means you won't distort the output when mixing two tracks together. However, it also means your mix CD will be quieter than commercial CDs. To remedy this, click the Master FX button (with a green cross icon) in the Mixer panel. Double-click the ExpressFX Dynamics effect, followed by OK. Use the settings Threshold: -6dB, Ratio: Inf:1, Attack: 0.0, Release: 100 and tick Auto gain compensate. This increases tracks to full volume without causing distortion during crossfades.

To add CD track IDs for each track in your mix, find each track start on the timeline and add a track marker by typing N. You'll need one of these at the start of the CD. When you're done, click Tools, Burn Disc-at-Once Audio CD, insert a blank CD and click OK. **BP**



◀ Sony Acid Music is designed for music production but is also highly adept at creating mix CDs

Salvaging old databases

Q For many years, I had a decent system for cataloguing my photographic slides. However, in February, my aged computer slithered gently into the great local council recycling scheme. I now have a fine replacement machine with Windows Vista Business Edition. What I do not have is a replacement for my old database: the beloved Ashton-Tate dBASE III. As you can imagine, recataloguing 65 thousand slides could keep me off the street corners for a winter or two. Any help will be gratefully received.

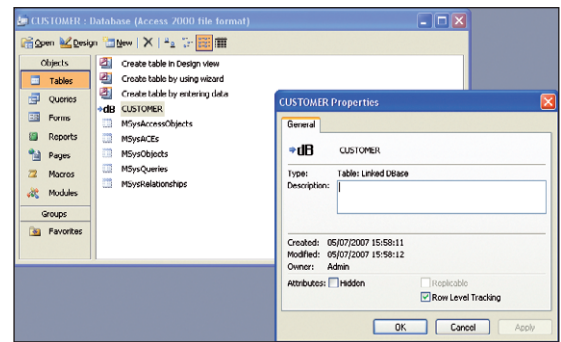
Brian Malkin

A There are several alternatives that you might want to consider. If you're really happy with dBASE III, one possibility is to try running your old version of dBASE III under Windows Vista. You could certainly run dBASE IV under Windows XP's

full-screen mode, and you might be able to get it to work under Windows Vista. We can't test this as we no longer have access to dBASE III; if any readers have tried it, we'd love to hear how you got on.

Another possibility would be to consider Visual FoxPro. You may remember that FoxPro was one of the dBASE 'clones' developed when Ashton-Tate seemed to lose its way with dBASE. Microsoft bought FoxPro and has continued developing it. It announced in March that the current version will be the last one to be developed, but it may well keep you going for a few years.

However, the most sensible move is probably to try one of the current Windows databases. Microsoft Access is highly regarded, and while it is very different from dBASE it comes with lots of



▲ You can salvage data from dBASE databases with Access

help and tutorials to teach you how it is used. You can open your old dBASE III databases with Access and salvage the data within them. Another possibility is FileMaker, which is designed to be easy to use and is certainly capable of storing your photographs. **KE**

Saving typing in Excel

Q I always enjoy reading the *Help* section – it really does give me a fascinating insight into the mind of the computer and what happens when it gets twisted. However, now I have a question of my own that I would appreciate some help with.

When I'm entering date-related data in Excel – for example, how I spend my money – I enter the date in column A, the account in column B, the occasion in column C, the amount in D and the category in E. This makes it easy to create a PivotTable report.

To save time, I will enter the date only once for each day. For all subsequent entries on the same date, I will leave the date cell blank. Likewise, if I am off to London on a business trip, the category will also be the same for all entries so I enter it just the once.

I want a macro to check a cell and, if it is blank, fill it with information from the cell above. Ideally, I would select a region of cells and it would work down each column filling in the blanks, before moving to the next column and repeating the exercise.

Incidentally, copying the information from out of a PivotTable results in the same data layout – only the top cell of a category has an entry.

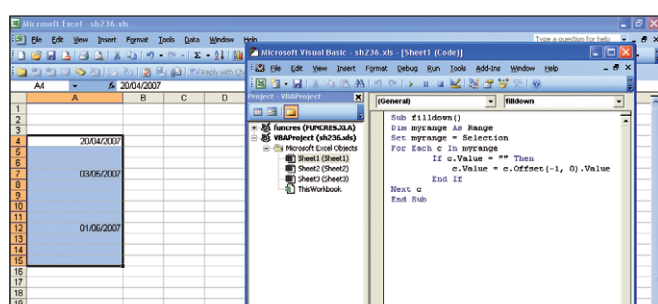
Dr Hugo Minney

A You can do this using a simple macro. Create a macro using Tools, Macro, Macros, Create. Enter the following:

```
Sub filldown()  
    Dim myrange As Range  
    Set myrange = Selection  
    For Each c In myrange  
        If c.Value = "" Then  
            c.Value = c.Offset(-1, 0).Value  
        End If  
    Next c  
End Sub
```

This macro assumes you've selected the range containing the data values and the blank cells you'd like filled. If you had values in cells A3, A7 and A9, with the other cells in the selected area of column A being blank, the macro copies the value in cell A3 into cells A4, A5 and A6. The A7 value is copied into cell A8, and the value in cell A9 copied down the rest of the selected area.

The macro designates myrange as a Range object and sets its value equal to the selected area. The For...Each loop looks at each cell within the range in turn. If the cell is empty, its value is set to the value of the cell above using Offset (-1,0). Offset is used to refer to cells relative to the current cell. The first parameter specifies how many cells above or below the current cell, the second specifies the offset to the left or right. **KE**



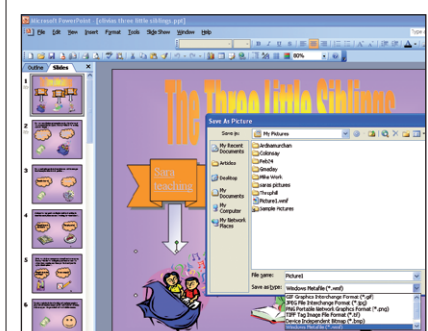
▲ You can automatically fill in blank cells in a range using a macro

Graphics from Word documents

Q We have a Word document with a WMF logo embedded in it. We'd like to have the graphic available as a separate WMF to use elsewhere. Unfortunately, the original WMF has been lost or deleted, and we're unable to find it anywhere. Can you suggest a way to retrieve it from the Word document in WMF format? We'd like to have it available at the original size and resolution.

F Henderson

A If you have access to Microsoft PowerPoint or Microsoft Publisher, you can copy and paste the image from Word into one of these, then save it in Windows Metafile (WMF) format. In PowerPoint or Publisher, right-click on the image and choose Save as Picture, then select WMF from the formats on offer. If you don't have access to the other Office applications but you do have another drawing package, you ought to be able to do something similar with that. **KE**



▲ Right-click in PowerPoint to save an image in WMF format

Creating an automatic tick box

Q I have an Access form with six tick boxes on it, plus a final tick box that should be ticked when all the other boxes have been ticked. Is there an easy way to automate this? My problem is that the boxes are ticked by different people, and not necessarily in order from one to six. No-one has responsibility for checking that everyone else has done their bit.

Margaret Hamilton

A The easiest way to verify that all the boxes have been ticked takes advantage of the fact that when a tick box is checked, it returns a value of -1. If it's empty, it returns 0. So if you check the sum of the values of all the tick boxes, it should be -6.

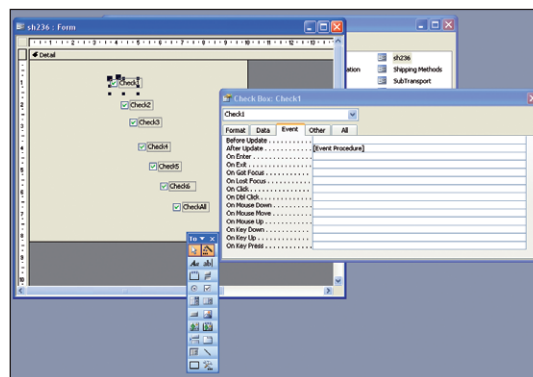
You need to create a function that calculates the sum, then call that function from the After Update event handler of every tick

box. If your tick boxes are called Check1 to Check6, the following function calculates the sum and returns true if all the boxes are ticked:

```
Private Function Alldone() As Boolean
    With Me
        totval = .Check1 +
            .Check2 + .Check3 +
            .Check4 + .Check5 + .Check6
    End With
    Alldone = (totval = -6)
End Function
```

If the final 'all completed' tick box is called CheckAll, your event handler for tick box Check1 is:

```
Private Sub Check1_AfterUpdate()
```



▲ Add the code to the After Update event of the tick boxes

```
CheckAll1 = Alldone()
End Sub
```

It must be duplicated for the other five boxes. **KE**

Making appointments appear with local time

Q I'm travelling a lot over the next few weeks for work, and will be passing through several time zones. I use my Outlook calendar to store all my appointments, meetings, flight times, train times and so on. My problem is that it can be very confusing. For example, if I'm viewing my calendar while on the west coast of the USA, and look at a meeting that will take place in Spain, it can show up on a different day. I want to know if there is a way of making appointments appear with their local time showing, no matter where you're viewing them from.

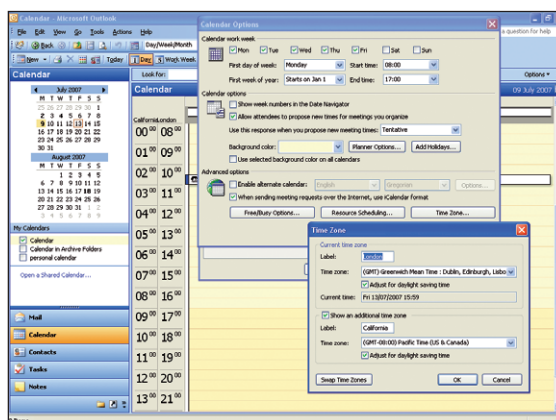
Guprit Singh

A You can partially achieve what you want, but are limited to showing two time zones at once. First, you need to tell Outlook to show an additional time zone. To do this, click Options on the Tools menu. In the dialog, choose Calendar Options, then click Time Zone. You can then add the time zone

you're currently in, or remove one of the existing time zones. If the zones are in the 'wrong' order, you can change them around by clicking the button labelled 'swap time zones'. When you now view your calendar, you'll see the time in both time zones down the left of your appointments list.

As you can show only two zones, you'll probably want to show your current zone and the one you're going to next. This will hopefully reduce the confusion, but you will have to remember to change your time zones as you move from place to place.

You need to bear in mind that the time zone you select as your second time zone is the one that is shown first in the calendar, but Windows XP uses the main time zone for the time and date on the taskbar on your desktop. If you swap the two time zones in



▲ Show additional time zones in Outlook to avoid confusion

Outlook to see the 'main' time zone first, you'll find your Windows time and date changed too. It seems counter-intuitive to have the second time zone shown first in the display, but that's the way it works, and we've not found a way around it. **KE**

Numbering slides in PowerPoint

Q In *Software Help*, *Shopper* August 2007, J Wright asked for a more flexible way to number PowerPoint slides. Here is another way to start your numbering on the slide you want with the number you want.

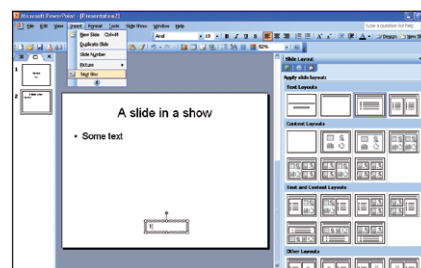
I have just completed a 30-slide PowerPoint presentation, and I needed the slide numbered as my clients were given written notes for each slide. As some of my slides had different coloured backgrounds, or pictures that covered the whole of the slide, the slide numbers from View or Headers and Footers could not be seen. To get over this problem, I used the Text button on the Drawing toolbar and created a box. I

highlighted the box and then typed in my numbers. This way, I can choose the style, size and colour I want to suit the background, and most importantly, I can place the numbers where I like.

The only thing to remember is that when you have finished your presentation, you should check your numbers in case you have moved slides around or deleted some.

John Wing

A Sometimes, a straightforward solution is the best way to achieve the results you want. PowerPoint presentations shouldn't go on forever (though sometimes they seem that way to the audience), so there isn't



▲ Add numbers directly on to PowerPoint slides using a text box

that much work involved in typing the slide numbers directly on to the slides. It's simple, and it works. **KE**

My DVD menus are wobbly

Q I create DVDs using Premiere Elements 3 with simple, static menu pages. The discs look fine when viewed on a computer screen, but when played on my TV certain parts of the menus wobble and flicker. Is there any way to avoid this?

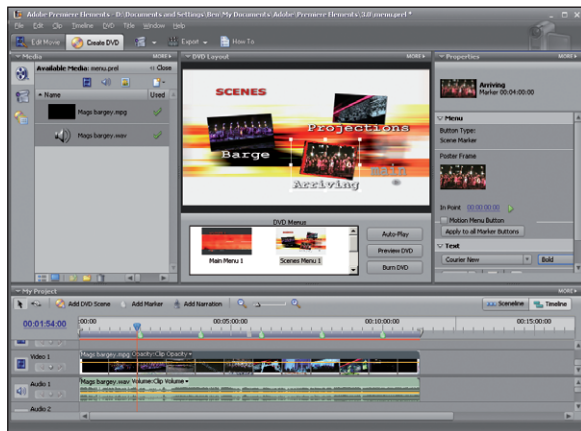
Simon McAndrews

A The problem you're experiencing is a side effect of interlacing. The PAL TV standard used in the UK is said to

have 25 frames of video per second (25fps), but this isn't quite accurate. In fact, there are 50 so-called fields, but each one contains only half of the image. The full frame is divided into 520 horizontal lines, with alternate fields showing all the odd lines and then all the even ones. This technique – commonly known as interlacing – produces smoother motion without increasing the amount of data needed compared to a 25fps progressive scan, where each frame contains the complete picture.

Problems tend to arise when a static image contains fine horizontal lines. If the line is just one pixel high, it will appear to flash on and off 25 times a second because it appears only in the upper or the lower field, but not in both. Similarly, if a horizontal line is two pixels high then it will appear to wobble up and down.

The only way that you can get around this is to avoid using horizontal lines that are less than three pixels high. This includes text, which tends to be full of horizontal lines, so go for chunky fonts and use them at generous point sizes of 40pt or above. **BP**



▲ By keeping DVD menus' text large, you should be able to avoid interlacing problems

Highlighting Excel cells according to rules

Q I have an Excel spreadsheet, and I want to highlight cells depending on the relative value of the cell above them. I want to highlight every cell whose value is equal to the value of the cell above plus one. For example, consider the set of numbers:

11
22
23
14
38
39

I want the values 23 and 39 highlighted. Is there a way to do this?

Pete Barker

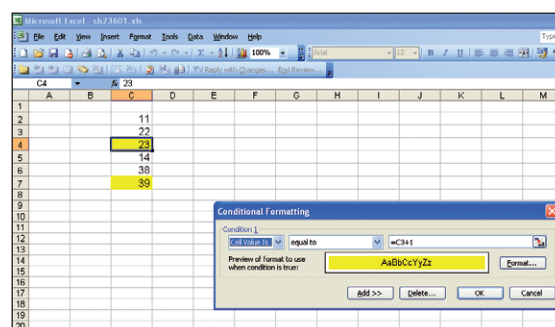
A First, you need to select the second cell in the range containing your values and then from the Format menu choose Conditional Formatting. In the dialog that appears, choose the option 'Cell Value Is'. In the second pane in the dialog box, you must select the option 'Equal to'. Finally, in the third pane, you need to enter the formula for the value you are

trying to match. This will depend on the location of the selected cell. If it was cell C3, for instance, then the formula you'd enter would be:

$=C2+1$

Once you have entered your formula, select the Format button and then Patterns (Cell shading). Choose the colour you want to use for your highlight. Click OK and then close the conditional formatting dialog.

Now, with the cell in which you entered the formula selected, you need to click the Format Painter tool (its icon looks like a paint brush). Drag the Format Painter over the rest of the cells in the range to which you want the conditional format applied. **KE**



▲ Use conditional formatting to highlight cells based on their values

Calculating sums in Word

Q Every quarter, I write a report in Word containing a table showing various project costs:

Project	Description	Project cost	Project completion
F1	Packaging system	£55,600	January 2008
F2	Electrical system	£12,269	October 2008
F3	Fork-lift truck	£37,612	August 2007
F4	General upgrade	£96,514	November 2007
F5	Lighting	£41,600	September 2007
	Total	£243,595	

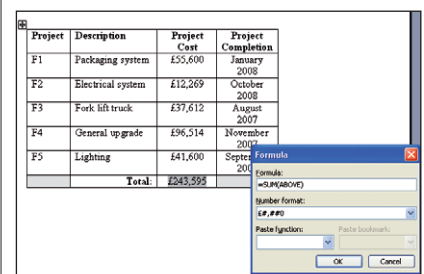
The costs come from different people and tend to change a couple of times as I write the report. When this happens, I use my calculator to re-evaluate the total. I don't want to cut and paste from Excel, as I've formatted the report quite carefully and I don't want to have to re-do that work. It's easier to enter the values manually.

Now I'm wondering if I should move the report into Excel so the total is calculated automatically, or if there are alternatives? I have sent you my table so you can explain.

J Kirkby

A You could transfer the report to Excel, but it is also possible to insert calculations in tables in Word. First you need to select the cell in which you want to do the addition. Then from the Table menu, choose Formula. This brings up a box in which you can enter your formula. Word assumes that you want to do a summation and puts the formula = SUM(ABOVE) into the formula box. However, the formula = SUM(C2:C6) works the same, as cells are referenced from A1 in the top right-hand corner to D7 (in your table), just like in Excel. Also if you want to perform another function such as an average or find maximum or minimum values, you can select this from the Paste Function box using the drop-down arrow to select the function you want. Your choice is entered into the Formula box.

In the second box, you can specify the format in which you would like the result displayed. Use the drop-down arrow on the right to see a selection of options. These can be modified by over-writing in the format box. To match your existing formatting, use the currency format with pounds, a comma delimiter for thousands and no figures beyond the decimal point. The formatting is done just as in Excel. Once you tick OK, the formula is entered in the cell. The value isn't calculated automatically as it would be in Excel. To see an updated value, you need to press the F9 key to force the table to recalculate the sum. **KE**



▲ You can include formulae within Word tables to carry out calculations